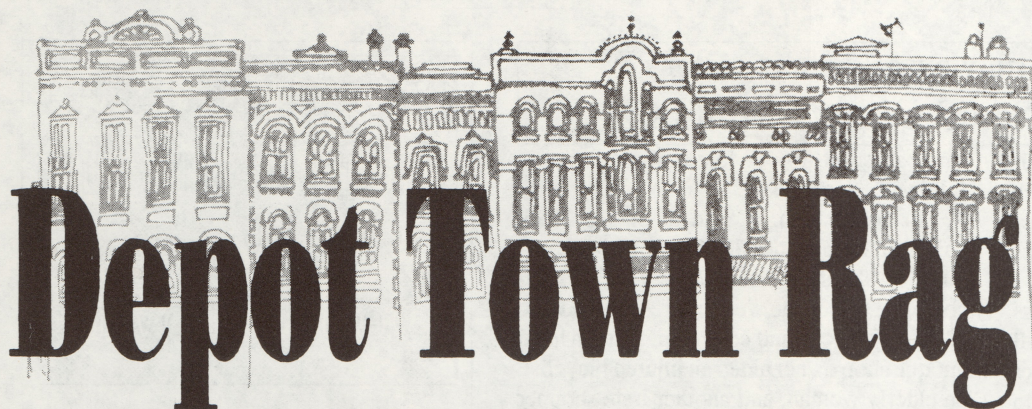




Depot Town Rag

January 1990

Historic hole

Cat houses are back

Market events

Promotional plan preview

DTA business and minutes

Olmsted's street plans

... and other strictly local stuff

A Publication of the DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION, INC. The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, MI 48198

Heritage Jazz to be reborn in March benefit

A March 31 benefit in the Freighthouse will create the necessary seed money to re-establish the Heritage Jazz Competition for next year's August Festival, says the committee of merchants formed after last year's jazz-less event. Bill French, co-owner of Aubree's Saloon and spokesperson for the group, says, "The benefit will feature a big

jazz name -- a national act."

The last jazz event in the district was June 1989, when The Ark co-sponsored the Frog Island Festival. Two years of no Winter Jazz Series have put new demands upon the Freighthouse. Soaring costs for liquor liability insurance have made these classy neighborhood events a thing of the not very distant past - but district retailers

have been breathing life back into what has proven to be the district's greatest ongoing promotion.

Other actives include Steve Gross and Linda French - liaison with the Heritage Festival planning group; Jack Miller - Policy Committees, Gary Urick - City liaison, Carolyn McKeever and Sandy French - bookings.

Attention Depot Towners:

A specially prepared

neighborhood

promotions proposal

is being circulated this month among the district's businesses. Please review and comment on this important plan.

FINAL ISSUE?

Maybe

A follow-up to editor's December addendum

All sponsorships for the monthly editions of *The Depot Town Rag* expired in 1989 and the editor circulated an 'addendum' notifying past and potential sponsors of the need to continue such a district-wide promotion with the distribution of the December issue. Some neighbors termed his communication 'negative' and 'alarmist' (see proposal for other promotions in this issue). Since so few have responded, officers of the Depot Town Association have underwritten the January issue so that local sponsors might have another month to pledge their support and design their ad copy.

Rates continue to be only ten dollars per month, payable in either six-month or year-long installments. Gary McKeever has been contacting all eligible sponsors throughout the end of the year in hopes that there will be enough interest to continue this unique publication.

Charles Kehlor, manager of the Ypsilanti Small Business Bureau at the Chamber of Commerce, has said, "If I had a business down there, I'd sponsor the whole thing myself. It's a marvelous selling tool for Depot Town!"

DDA ad valorem hearing January 22

After nearly eight years of indolence, the Depot Town Downtown Development Authority (DDA) has petitioned City Council for permission to levy the 2 mil Ad Valorem tax upon themselves for funds to operate the Authority established in 1982. The hearing will take place at the January 22, 1990 City Council meeting, even though a district-wide hearing was held on November 9 to which all affected property owners were invited.

DDA chair, Paul Feters, presented a four-point proposal to Ypsilanti City Council in December, showing the need for:

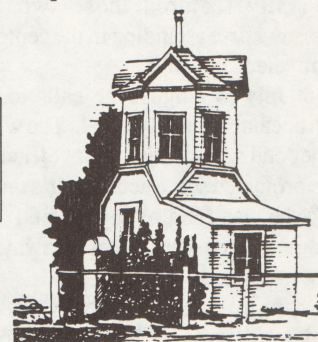
1. **2 mil Ad Valorem tax** which should provide up to \$3000 a year for the operation of the District plans.
2. **Unifying the District** by bringing in six properties which were excluded in 1982.
3. **Creation of a Development Plan** which will include new parking, relocation of dumpsters, replication of the signal tower at the railroad crossing, planting trees, and many smaller improvements to the public spaces which include both Riverside and Frog Island Parks.
4. **Tax Increment Financing (TIF)** to capture increased values for public projects within the district.

Only the Ad Valorem tax, a voluntary tax upon the existing District, is proposed at this time.

After a reply from the City Attorney, DDA was encouraged to prove deterioration of the District and cited many recent problems, including:

- continued neglect of the MCRR depot
- restaurant going out of business
- specialty shops closing
- restaurants cutting back hours
- lack of foot traffic and local promotions
- south side lot neglect
- largest buildings standing 4/5 empty
- Freighthouse unable to meet codes, activities cut
- Artrain building empty
- street lights out for months at a time
- tree planting plan abandoned
- no funds for creation of formal Development Plan for DDA

The signal tower DDA plans to rebuild.



Other members of the Authority, in addition to Feters, include Scott Sobby, Rex Richie, Corinne Sikorski, Tom Dodd, Bill French, and Carolyn McKeever. Mayor Clyde King is an ex-officio member of the Depot Town Downtown Development Authority.

Historic hole creates dim view of district history : Where were you when the lights went out?

In keeping with a neighborhood which values tradition and just about anything old, the hole which appeared in the sidewalk in front of Shankwiler's Artrain building at 52 East Cross Street is entering its second year of history.

Historians may one day recall this story as an epic tale of bulb-snatching, since it all began with a burned-out street light in October of 1988. The mock-mansard style street lamp in front of Hon's Flowers had gone out and, since one of the local committee members was also an employee of the Detroit Edison Company, the problem was passed on through volunteer committee channels where locals saw each other regularly.

By December of that year an elaborate extension cord was stretched from the taller street light nearest to the Sidetrack. Then, just a year ago, the sidewalk was dug up in front of number 52 to repair the underground wiring and two sawhorses marked "CSE" were placed in the remaining two-foot by four-foot by eight-inch-deep hole in front of the Shankwiler's front door.

After the first few mishaps in that hazardous impediment, Depot Towners began to call the Detroit Edison Company Customer Services Department with some regularity. As the district prepared for the thousands who would watch the Fourth of July Parade, the calls to Edison became a weekly ritual. The parade came and went — and several more citizens fell into the ever-deepening abyss.

The *Ann Arbor News* came out with a slick newcomers' issue of "Discover," a magazine which featured four photos on its cover 1) Gallup Park, 2) UM Stadium, 3) UM Botanical Gardens and 4) DEPOT TOWN! But, much to the chagrin of local boosters, the camera angle from the roof of the Thompson Building prominently featured those two Detroit Edison sawhorses standing in the center of our most traveled sidewalk.

From July to August the calls to Detroit Edison became a weekly ritual. The woman at the other end was cordial, if not efficient, and always promised some action. "It's on a work order," she was fond of saying, and "I'll see that it gets taken care of right away." But nothing happened.

More calls followed, with some locals 'loosing their cool' over the always cool operator on the Detroit Edison end of the line. Our inside man even acknowledged that he had seen the hole, himself, and wondered at the possibility of those sawhorses falling over onto

cars parked nearby. More hints of progress followed. Same result.

In desperation, a resident on the block painted the Customer Services telephone number on the sawhorses (761-8716) and encouraged those who were injured in the deepening hole to call and complain. After a local antique shop owner aided an injured bicyclist, an elderly woman, and another irate shopper with minor injuries, yet another call was made. Fearing the onslaught of Heritage Festival traffic, she called the posted number in what locals count as at least the twentieth telephone complaint made for that single hole in the ground.

"We'll take care of it right away," said the cordial Edison operator. Yeah, yeah.

But they did. On August 8th, a truck came by with a

load of asphalt and a temporary 'hot patch' was trowled into the declevity. And along with the work crew was a woman who identified herself as a public relations officer of the company. Most of the folks in the block turned out to witness the occasion.

"We're so glad you called," she intoned. "You know, yours was the first complaint we received." (!) She took Polaroid photos of the event and made sincere promises that the hole would be filled with a permanent patch of concrete when there were enough other holes in their region to warrant a full-sized mix in a cement truck.

Passers-by now wonder how wide a region the Detroit Edison Company serves since another six months have passed in the life of this now historic hole. The dirt has settled and the 'hot mix' is working its way downward, again creating a trip-and-fall hazard on that busy thoroughfare. Tourists' trips to Depot Town have become more like tourists' trips *in* Depot Town, as pedestrians continue to stumble into our infamous sidewalk chasm again.

Interested or aggrieved parties may wish to call the Customer Services number listed above and inquire as to the next work order on this project. Don't be shy. They're always very polite.

[NOTE: Since this issue has gone to press, two more Detroit Edison streetlights — one in front of Theracom, the other in front of the Old Town Restaurant — have gone out. And another one is blinking erratically.

Don't call anyone. It could only make matters worse. Someone might dig up *all* the sidewalks. After all, it's only dark for half the day, and the days are getting longer all the time.]

**Sometimes you can't
tell history from a
hole in the ground.**



Let's eat out
down in
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... and dairy bar

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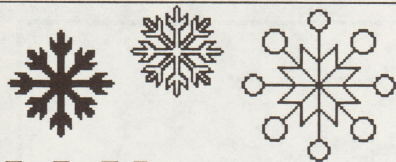
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**The Victorian Holiday
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in many participating businesses
in historic Depot Town

Page 2 DTA, January 1990



Winter Events

at the
Ypsilanti Farmers' Market

January 13
Origami Day!



January 20
Kids' Time - Selling Day

January 27
Snowflake Crafts Sell-out!
Winter Liquidation!



February 3
CABIN FEVER
Used Book Sales



February 17
Train Day!



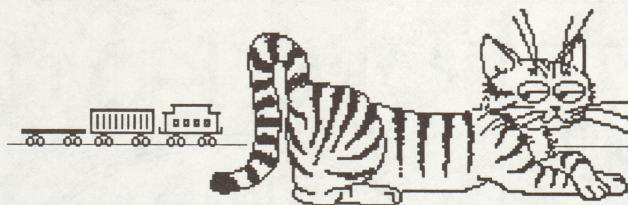
February 10
International Crafts Day!
Crafts & Gifts Worldwide

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in the historic Freight House
Wed. & Sat. 7 am - 3 pm



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all year 'round



Cat houses returning to the district

Winter cold has brought a host of feral felines who have been inhabiting the district dumpsters onto the back porches of apartments in Depot Town. Soft touch residents are providing food and shelter for many of the neighborhood's wild cats and some of the kitties have moved into every stairwell or niche that can provide a home out of the chill winter wind. Not since the James Bond character has the term Pussy Galore been so appropriate.

When Ma Bush ran her restaurant dumpster to a back house of ill repute in her fancy

rooms above the Artrain Building (52 East Cross) in the 1890's, neighbors just decided they would put up with the popular culture and coexist with her ladies of the evening (and mornings and afternoons, too, in a railroad district!) and some of today's residents have done the same. • *Hardly*, an orange and white striped cat, claims at least three addresses on the street and has spent most of the winter on a heated water-bed.

• *Porch Cat* moved from a restaurant dumpster to a back porch box, built especially for

him. But this winter, he patrols a second floor hallway where the residents feed and care for him. The former alley cat now resembles a fat polar bear.

In their absence from the street scene, new kitties have taken their places around the alleys — either born in the alleys last summer, or dropped of by folks who couldn't find the Huron Valley Humane Society.

They're getting to their final destination, anyway, since folks are making weekly runs to the Animal shelter with boxloads of cold and hungry un-tagged cats from the district this winter.

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The Depot Town Association, Inc. December, 1989

November's minutes will be reviewed for approval at next month's meeting. They will not be included in the January Depot Town Rag.

Treasurer's report: No monthly figures are available. Treasurer, Judi Monaghan, will meet with V.P., Jacob Guter and Budget & Events chair, Carolyn McKeever, on Wednesday, December 27 to review final tax figures for DTA's 1987 events.

Standing Committees:

Budget/Events:

DTA has submitted a second letter to the City of Ypsilanti reiterating our interest in using the Freighthouse as a staging ground and our curiosity regarding fulfillment of the Freighthouse Master Plan. No response has been forthcoming.

The move is on for The Ark and DTA to negotiate the terms of cooperation for the 1990 Frog Island Jazz Festival. DTA is requesting a meeting be set up promptly.

Neighborhood merchants have circulated a petition and discovered strong support for Heritage Jazz in Depot Town. They will make a presentation to the Heritage Festival Committee.

N.I.F.T.Y. (New Initiative For Tourism in Ypsilanti) . . . is an idea originator: Classical Music in a Classical Setting is working to secure funding for concerts held in Ypsilanti's beautiful historic churches.

Caboose: A distinctive surrounding for your next event. Just \$25 to rent (with a \$10 key deposit). Contact Gary McKeever @483-

4245.

Rag Report: Eastern Michigan University has requested both a gratis subscription to and a complete set of back issues of our neighborhood publication. Their request takes positive note of *The Rag's* historical reporting and its representation of "modern day" Depot Town.

Unfortunately, due to a lack of cohesive community support, there may not be a neighborhood *Rag* to subscribe to. The printing bills for the paper are far outstripping collectible revenue. Editor, Tom Dodd, reports that

January 1990 may be *The Depot Town Rag's* final issue. This month's response will tell.

Second Vice Presidents:

Merchants: The merchants have published a cookbook featuring the contestants in the 1988 Victorian Holiday Bake-Off. The book is being distributed through neighborhood merchants.

Engine Club: Celebrate in style, holding their annual Christmas Party December 4.

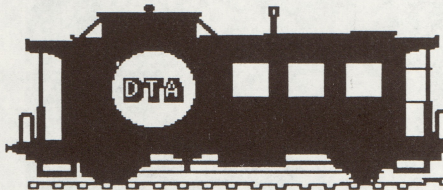
Engineering Society: Kids looking to do your jobs! Contact via The Old Caboose mail slot (in the Market Plaza).

Other business:

The Depot Town DDA ad valorem tax will be addressed in a public hearing, January 22, 1990 @ Ypsilanti City Hall.

Golden Goose Award: - E.T. You know who you are, go home (and read your packet).

Best Yet Award: Plowed sidewalks, thanks to Ypsilanti's DPS.



January 1990

Depot Towners are invited to participate in any or all of the following activities for the good of this old commercial district:

Development Authority (DDA)

7:30 p.m. Thursday, 1/11

Freighthouse Coffee Shop

Association

7:30 p.m. Thursday, 1/18

in The Old Caboose

DDA Public Hearing

7:30 p.m. Monday, 1/22

City Hall

Antique Engine Club

7:00 p.m. Thursday, 1/25

Freighthouse

Watch for the district
Promotional Proposal
in local businesses
during the month of January



THE DEPOT TOWN RAG

A publication of the Depot Town Association, Inc. a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation dedicated to preserving the unique character of the neighborhood and to the enhancement of its business climate.

-Tom Dodd, editor

Depot Town Association, Inc.

Paul Feters, president

c/o The Old Caboose

400 Market Place

Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198

Active Memberships:

- Ypsilanti Chamber of Commerce
- Washtenaw Council for the Arts
- Neighborhood Associations of Michigan

A special Promotional Proposal is being circulated to neighborhood businesses this month, along with this issue of The Rag. Please respond to the three questions at the end. If your response is not received in The Caboose by February 1, the proposers will assume the third category (below).

3 good responses to local promotion proposals:

- ☐ 1. I want to pay someone else to do the job of neighborhood promotion - on a sliding scale according to the number of employees in each business.
- ☐ 2. I'll volunteer to do some parts of it myself. My neighbors and I will each take at least one major event to coordinate.
- ☐ 3. My business is not affected by neighborhood promotions and I do not want to be included in any of the benefits gained from them.

Signature _____

Please return this coupon to The Caboose by February 1. Thank you.

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Report Upon Proposed Improvements, forming a basis for a General City Plan

Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, Brookline, Mass. December 31, 1913

Recommendations for River, Forest and East Cross Streets

[This is the fourth in a series of excerpts from a study of Ypsilanti done in 1913 by the famous Olmsted Brothers, the landscape architects of New York's Central Park, Detroit's Belle Isle and Vanderbilt's Biltmore Gardens in Ashville, North Carolina.

This month's portions, about streets in Depot Town, shows how the Olmsteds' plan would have made the district into one much like those alongside the Chicago L (elevated railroad).]

River Street

River Street, the main approach from the northeast, is now 100 feet wide south of Forest Avenue; it should be widened north of Forest Avenue as far as the proposed cemetery entrance; and farther north building lines should be established. This street should be extended northward up the value to serve as a direct outlet for the section line roads northeast of the City (Clark Road). Plans should be made for abolishing the grade crossing of the Michigan Central Railway with this street at Cross Street. Plans have already been suggested for elevating the railway at this crossing.

South of Cross Street, River Street is now 100 feet wide, with a 48-foot roadway flanked on either side by a 20-foot tree strip and with a 6-foot walk at the property line. On each side there are two rows of trees between the walk and the curb. If the roadway were made much narrower, and the planting spaces widened, the appearance would be much more agreeable; and this should be done unless the plans ultimately adopted for eliminating the grade crossing involve using a part of the width of River Street for bridge approaches. These should be planted near the railway crossing and at the points in the street



River Street, the main approach from the northeast, looking north from Cross Street, showing ample width for the first three blocks and the need of widening beyond.



River Street, looking south from Cross Street, showing the narrow planting strips which could be widened to advantage to include the unused portions of the traveled way.

rows where they are missing; also trees should be planted near the south end where there are none. The south end of the street should be extended in connection with the proposed river park treatment.

Forest Avenue.

East

Forest Avenue, east of Huron Street, a fairly important approach from the east, should have building lines. Plans for the abolition of the grade crossing of this street with the Michigan Central Railway tracks should be included with

the other grade crossing plans.

East Cross Street

East Cross Street, another approach from the east, is devoid of street trees near the railway station and between the station and the river.

There is no good reason why street trees should not be planted there. Tree pits should be prepared and trees should be set as recommended for Congress Street (Michigan Avenue).

Next month: The Olmsted Bros.' 1913 recommendations for two city-owned properties along the shores of the Huron River, with the possibility of them being turned into parks: today's much loved Riverside and Frog Island Parks.

With all this retrospective of city planning, readers are bound to ask, "How are we doing, so far?" Anyone want to predict what Depot Town and its environs will look like in the year 2060? Future *Depot Town Rags* will certainly appreciate the forethought. We did.



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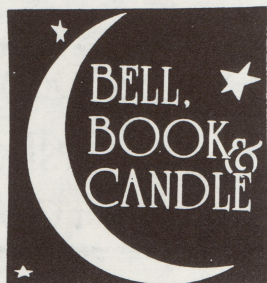
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